



December 7, 2009

To Whom It May Concern:

Ponderosa Elementary School was the recipient of a Professional Standards Commission grant in the spring of 2009. Our school used 100% of the funding to purchase copies of *Getting to Got It!* by Betty K. Garner for the entire teaching staff. Books were purchased in the summer of 2009 and given to teachers at that time.

In July, 2009, I attended the Northwest Inland Writing Project's Advanced Institute with Ponderosa teachers Ayrha Ellis and Marie Hammon. It was through this coursework and with feedback provided by the teaching staff last spring that the logistics and complete content of our professional development study was collaboratively developed. All content was aligned to both the district's focus on formative assessment and to our site needs. Those needs included using writing to learn as an instructional strategy and helping students develop cognitive structures. Below is the master plan for our site's professional development, made possible by the PSC grant.

### **Using Writing to Learn For Formative Assessment, Critical Thinking, and Student Engagement**

Ponderosa Elementary School Site Professional Development-Aligns to district wide Professional Development (PD) focus on **formative assessment**, continues on the **long term writing goals** of our site council, and folds in knowledge of how to **help students develop cognitive structures for learning**. The *Getting to Got it!* books were funded by a state Professional Standards Committee grant awarded to Ponderosa last spring.

This site plan fulfills requirements for our district's collaborative hours that occur at Ponderosa.



Monthly Topics and WTL Strategies:

1. September- Intro and chapter 9- SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS of LEARNING - The immaterial, intangible qualities or elements that permeate and influence all learning
2. October- RECOGNITION- The ability to identify a match or fit between two or more pieces of information; confused with knowing

Text Connections

Visualization (sketch to stretch with caption)

3. October/November MEMORIZATION- Storing and recalling Information

Connecting with existing knowledge

Cartooning, sequencing, mnemonics, acrostics, rhymes, concept mapping, outlining

4. December- CONSERVATION of CONSTANCY- the ability to understand how SOME aspects or characteristics of a thing can change while others stay the same

Transferring information from one setting to another (math, language, social studies, and science applications- see p. 48)

Questioning- "What do you notice? Why?"

5. January- CLASSIFICATION- Involves identifying, comparing, and ordering information or data to create meaning based on relationships on parts to each other and parts to the whole. To classify, students need to classify the criteria for belonging or not belonging.

Explain WHY an item belongs or doesn't belong

6. February- SPATIAL ORIENTATION- Helps individuals identify and compare where objects and places are in relationship to each other and to oneself (boundaries, relationships, etc.)

Graphic organizers

7. March- TEMPORAL ORIENTATION- Processing information by comparing events in relationship to WHEN they occur

Timeline

Chronology

8. April- METAPHORICAL THINKING- Making sense of information by comparing one thing to another using figurative language

Metaphors, Similes, Idioms

Monthly PD Format Loop

Beginning in October, a Writing To Learn (WTL) strategy aligned to assigned reading in *Getting to Got it* (listed under each category above) will be modeled, then guided practice of WTL strategy (above) in the meeting setting will be conducted. Independent practice of the WTL strategy will occur in your own classrooms.

At the next grade level collaborative meeting following the initial PD meeting in each month: discuss student responses on WTL and how that information will guide your instruction. What strategies did each teacher use on content that may have been responsible for the level of understanding exhibited on the WTL formative assessments? Discuss strategies and implement what seems to be working (based upon formative assessment of your choice).

Read next assigned chapter in *Getting to Got it!* Meeting dates will be posted in each week's electronic bulletin.

The staff at Ponderosa Elementary is grateful for the opportunity afforded by the Professional Standards Commission through the grant awarded. Though our grant activities are not yet complete, the process has already enriched our professional conversations. It is exciting to hear staff discuss and apply the ideas in the book and see more teachers using writing to learn activities as a formative assessment tool. Ultimately, the PSC grant has helped us to become better teachers.

With Sincere Thanks,

Kathy Baker

